DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 053 179 TM 000 709

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TITLE Accountability in Teacher Training.
PUB DATE 71
NOTE 5p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the California Educational Research Association, San Diego, California, April 1971

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS College Students, College Supervisors, *Curriculum Development, *Educational Accountability, Elementary School Teachers, *Inservice Teacher Education, *Preservice Education, Special Education Teachers, Student Teaching, Teacher Attitudes, Teacher Education, Teacher Education Curriculum, *Teacher Role, Team Teaching
IDENTIFIERS Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory, MTAI, OEO, Open Ended Opinionnaire

ABSTRACT

This project attempted to combine pre-service methods, student teaching and in-service curriculum improvement. The participants were 18 elementary classroom teachers, 22 college students, 1 Miller-Unruh teacher, 1 Title I teacher, 4 special education teachers, and a principal. The college students were assigned to one elementary (K-8) school for one semester all day, every school day. They were enrolled for a 3 unit curriculum course. One of the main objectives of the project was to demonstrate that curriculum study and improvement can be effectively accomplished by intensive introspection on the part of a staff for the purpose of explaining and instructing teacher training candidates. Conversely, it was held that the college students in pre-service training would be effectively trained if their experiences were comprehensive and genuinely related to and included actual teaching. Pre and post evaluations were done using standardized and informal instruments. Results were significant. Other, more subjective evaluations were done on proficiency in the teaching of subjects and skills. These results were also highly positive. It is concluded that institutions that participate in teacher training must be responsible for the exploration and initiation of options for more involved, comprehensive programs. (Author/CK)

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ACCOUNTABILITY IN TEACHER TRAINING

Many schemes have been devised for pre-service and in-service teacher training. Most fall short because they are not comprehensive or practical and many do not have evaluations based on pre-post performance.

There is also the problem of placing college students in student teaching or observation-participation assignments with classroom teachers who have opposing perceptions about educational goals and methods than the college supervisor or professor also working concurrently with the college student.

Add to this dilemma the frustration of the consultant or professor attempting to assist a staff in an in-service program, meeting once a week in the late afternoon or evening and with only part of the staff in attendance. One of the main objectives of the project was to demonstrate that curriculum study and improvement can be effectively accomplished by intensive introspection on the part of a staff for the purpose of explaining and instructing teacher training candidates. Conversely, it was held that the college students in pre-service training would be effectively trained if their experiences were comprehensive and genuinely related to and included actual teaching. The college students also contributed directly as participating members in joint staff-student teacher seminars and faculty meetings.

There is a need to redefine teacher training. Current practices indicate that most teacher training institutions operate as though teacher training begins with foundation courses, is furthered by methods and is terminated with student teaching. This marks a definite juncture in that a teacher's professional training is complete and they are made to feel that henceforth they are competent and should be self reliant. Further training is then called "in service" and is voluntarily sought by the teacher or is imposed and often arranged by district mandate, through workshops, institutes and/or extension courses. These instructional programs are, almost without exception, pre-packaged, designed and delivered by instructors who are not intimately connected or involved with the local district, its teachers, children, nor program exigencies.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that teachers both in pre-service and in-service would change in a significant positive direction in their attitudes toward: 1. themselves in the teacher's roll, 2. children they teach, 3. colleagues, and 4. the training program after participating in a project that defines teacher training as a non-junctured process, or a continuum with one end point being the declaration of candidacy, and the other retirement from the profession.

Subject

The Junction School project in Shasta County was designed and instituted in an attempt to demonstrate a plan that feasibly offers training for teachers

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at various points along the professional continuum simultaneously. The participants were 18 elementary classroom teachers, 22 college students (11 in each fall and spring semesters), 1 Miller-Unruh teacher, 1 Title I teacher, 4 special education teachers, a principal, and two college instructors.

The college students were enrolled for 16 units, 8 in methods and 8 in student teaching. They were all assigned to the Junction School for all day, 5 days a week. During the semester they student taught at two grade levels from K-8, some also student taught in an Educable Mentally Retarded or Educationally Handicapped classroom. All of the staff of the school was enrolled for a 3 unit curriculum course each semester. Two college professors were responsible for team teaching the methods, the curriculum courses, and supervising the student teaching.

Instruments

The instruments used for pre and post experience measuring were the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory and an open ended opinionnaire (known as the OEO) designed to reflect the objectives of the project.

Free evaluative responses were also elicited in writing at mid year and at the end of the experience from both the student teachers and classroom teachers. The MTAI was machine scored, means and standard deviations were computed and t tests on pre and post test results were calculated.

The OEO was hand scored using a similar scoring formula as that used for the MTAI of rights or positives minus wrong or negative responses. Means and standard deviations were also computed and t tests on pre and post test results were calculated.

The free responses were analyzed as to categories of concerns and whether each evaluation was negative or positive.

Treatment

During the first semester the student teachers attended 2 seminars a week focused on methodology, materials and problems that they were encountering. They also attended one seminar a week with their master teachers. It was the theory that student teachers and classroom teachers would plan and evaluate together and thus learn from each other.

Opportunities for released time for both classroom teachers and student teachers were provided so that they could visit and observe in other schools where exemplary, interesting or innovative programs were being used.

A small but adequate budget made it possible to add significantly to the professional library of the school. Also secretarial help was available. An all day workshop was financed by the project with Mr. James Moffett serving as consultant, whose book A Student Centered Curriculum was used as a basic text for background.

During the second semester the direction of the seminars changed because of the exigency the staff felt toward reviewing their curriculum and planning the scope and sequence in behavioral terms in line with recent legislative demands. We felt this represented deeper commitment on the part of the staff. Even though the joint seminars with the student teachers had been valuable, this task received a higher priority by the group. So the second semester seminars became curriculum work sessions for the staff relieved from teaching by their student teachers. Separate seminars for the student teachers were held with the college instructors focusing on methods, materials and problems related to their student teaching. Learning how to write and use curriculum objectives in behavioral terms was emphasized.

Role of College Personnel

The role of the college supervisor or instructor becomes crucial and pivotal in a project such as this. Establishing credibility with the students and staff was the prime objective. The criterion of success was that we would be considered as a working colleague and consultant not as an administrator or decision maker.

Many times we did serve in a non-directive counselor capacity as well as arbiter in disputes. We also taught demonstration lessons and occasionally rescued student teachers when a lesson fell apart or a classroom crisis developed.

We refused to serve in any staff personnel decision capacity so that we were perceived as non threatening as possible to the classroom teachers. We developed methods of presenting the alternatives by forcing the staff to make the decisions. In doing this we felt we were developing and disintering leadership from within their ranks that would still be present and operable when we were no longer working on this particular public school campus. Special efforts were also made for the specialists within their own cadre to be called upon to advise and apply their expertise to problem solving, decision making, and instruction.

The role of the college supervisor or instructor as briefly outlined here cannot be established on occasional drop-in visits. This required a full time commitment. Another college instructor, Mrs. Pat Brose, and I became a team to carry out this assignment. We each spent 2 to 3 full days a week on this project. In this way one of us was always on the school campus.

Results

The instruments used for measuring the change in participants produced the following results:

The MTAI pre and post results correlated highly with the results obtained from the OEO. However, the MTAI failed to discriminate a significant change in participants from pre to post testing periods. The OEO produced significant positive change scores. The free response evaluations were overwhelmingly

positive. Those received at mid-year gave valuable constructive criticism that gave direction to the second semester program.

The first semester student teachers voluntarily held seminars to evaluate and draw some conclusions about their experiences in the project. In their written report they stated that they had come to realize that education was a cooperative endeavor with the necessity for constant reevaluation of goals, philosophies and teaching methods. They felt a deep sense of involvement because they had participated in full time student teaching, and had experienced a semester of entire school days. They were able to receive immediate feedback from students, master teachers and/or we college supervisors because of the integrated program. Unlike the traditional segmented approach they were able to experiment with and apply ideas from their methods seminars immediately in the classroom.

They felt they and other teacher trainees must be allowed to take a major part in decision making directly affecting them as individuals and as a group without reprisal on recommendations which might affect their futures.

Direct observations of the effects of the program on teacher proficiency by the college supervisors, the school administration and the project director from the County Office are summarized here.

1. Teachers feel a greater responsibility to the total school program because they have become aware of the functions of all the staff through seminars and course work connected with the project.

2. The project created more time for planning, preparation of plans and evaluation with a result that they have become more alert to specific problems of students. They have had time to analyze pupils needs and capabilities, and have gained proficiency in diagnosis, prognosis and prescription.

3. Teachers have become better acquainted with their own students, the parents and the total school staff. As a result, parent-teacher conferences have become much more meaningful for the students and parents, and during these sessions the student teacher was made a vital part.

4. An awareness of what is being done in education in other areas has resulted from field trips, visitations, guest speakers, discussions and study.

5. A concern for the total school curriculum is being experienced by all teachers, and the second semester was devoted to beginning the writing of a scope and sequence in behavioral terms for all subject areas from K through 8th grade. This is being continued by the staff during the summer.

6. Teachers are beginning to realize the meaning of "accountability" or at least its presence in the scheme of things, and are serving on various committees in this respect.

7. The presence of young, dynamic student teachers with new ideas and an understanding of today's youth, coupled with concerned supervisors from the college has given the staff an exciting experience. It has revitalized them, given them new goals, and some have realized that further professional growth is necessary, resulting in enrollment in college classes and graduate program. Two masters theses are now being written by staff members using the project as a study, one on the effect of the projects on regular teachers and the other on student teachers.

8. The educational significance of this project has been shown by the fact that six similar projects are being instituted by Chico State College using the Junction Project model and results as a pilot plan.

Much data was gathered that can contribute to valuable insights into and conclusions about the role of the college supervisor-consultant professor in relation to a school staff, student teachers, and public school administrators.

It is conceivable that college supervisors could help to establish supportive training centers such as defined by this project in cooperation with the public schools where student teachers and classroom teachers will grow and succeed in a professional climate that nurtures and encourages growth and exploration. Here teacher training can be approached as a continuous on-going process rather than being perceived as sterile non-contiguous segments that never get connected for some, or are terminated and never reach others in the profession.

It is concluded that institutions that participate in teacher training must alter their definition so that teacher training is a non-junctured process thought of as a continuum from the declaration of candidacy to retirement from the profession. Further we at the college level must be responsible for the exploration and initiation of options for more involved, comprehensive and accountable programs.